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LUMBER PRODUCTION APPROACHES ALL-TIME RECORD FOR NORTHERN ROCKY MOUNTAIN REGION

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A near record 1,729,671,000 feet of lumber, board measure, were produced in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region[1/] in 1950. This was only 1,490,000 feet short of the record production of 1,731,161,000 board feet for the year 1925. Lumber output for the year 1950 showed a slight increase, nearly 5 percent, over that for 1948, the last year in which the lumber census was carried on. This increase, however, was not region-wide. Montana production fell off 61,000,000 feet, or 10 percent, from the 1948 level, while North Idaho production went up 139,000,000 feet, or 18 percent, and that of Northeast Washington remained nearly stationary.

Table 1. Lumber production by mill class - 1950

Mill class	Production range	Montana	North Idaho	Northeast Washington	Northern region
		Thousand board feet			
0	Less than 50	4,432	922	614	5,968
1a	50 - 199	10,963	4,321	2,528	17,812
1b	200 - 499	17,031	8,029	6,917	31,977
2	500 - 999	24,640	24,148	11,507	60,295
3	1,000 - 4,999	135,361	124,908	48,043	308,312
4	5,000 - 9,999	88,007	60,039	39,267	187,313
5 2/	10,000 and larger	255,880	702,795	159,319	1,117,994
Total		536,314	925,162	268,195	1,729,671

1/ Montana; Idaho, north of the Salmon River; and Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties, Northeast Washington.

2/ Mill class 5 and larger grouped to avoid disclosing production of individual mills.

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As in the past six years, ponderosa pine was the leading lumber species followed in order by Douglas-fir, western white pine, and western larch. However, the production of western white pine and western larch rose from the 1948 level while ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir fell off. Production of all minor species was up as compared with 1948, with the cut of Engelmann spruce being nearly double, and hemlock quadruple.

Although the total number of mills in Region 1 increased slightly between 1948 and 1950, the number of active mills apparently decreased. This decrease was principally in the smaller classes and its effect on regional production was more than offset by the increased output of the large mills. In Montana several class-3 and larger mills dropped out of production and contributed materially to the 10-percent slump in production in that state.

In 1948 those mills cutting more than 5,000,000 board feet accounted for 70 percent of the total production. In 1950 this group of mills cut nearly 76 percent of the total output. The proportion of the total output cut by class-5 mills (those cutting 10,000,000 board feet or more annually) rose from 53 percent to 65. This group of mills increased its cut by 248,000,000 board feet, though the total regional output rose by only 76,000,000 board feet.

Table 2. Lumber production by species - 1950

Species	Montana	North Idaho 1/	Northeast Washington 2/	Total
		Thousand board feet		
Western white pine	18,248	287,657	37,430	343,335
Ponderosa pine	191,686	178,654	111,253	481,593
Douglas-fir	126,379	202,493	67,471	395,343
Western larch	160,380	80,529	41,450	282,359
Grand fir	42	125,776	5,030	130,848
Engelmann spruce	35,953	15,300	3,002	54,255
Western redcedar	163	25,717	3,044	28,924
Western hemlock	43	8,686	265	8,994
Lodgepole pine	3,281	339	5	3,625
Cottonwood	105	11	245	361
Other	34	-	-	34
Total	536,314	925,162	268,195	1,729,671
		Number of sawmills		
Active	425	218	120	763
Idle	86	41	16	143
Total	511	259	136	906

1/ Includes that part of Idaho north of the Salmon River.
2/ Includes Ferry, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, and Whitman Counties.

Table 3. Lumber production by states and counties - 1950

State and county 1/	Lumber production	State and county 1/	Lumber production
	M ft. b.m.		M ft. b.m.
Northeast Washington		Montana	
Ferry	20,148	Beaverhead	837
Pend Oreille	56,438	Broadwater and Jefferson	1,675
Spokane, Lincoln, and Whitman	128,807	Lewis & Clark, Teton, and Glacier	20,975
Stevens	62,802	Gallatin	4,054
		Madison	2,635
Total	268,195	Park	4,575
		Fergus, Cascade, Judith Basin, and Meagher	3,479
		Sweetgrass, Stillwater, and Carbon	1,564
North Idaho		Carter, Powder River, and Rosebud	1,829
Benewah	46,140	Golden Valley, Big Horn, Richland, Musselshell, Wheatland, and Yellowstone	1,734
Bonner	89,922	Flathead	127,236
Boundary	19,272	Lake	28,865
Clearwater	104,913	Granite and Missoula	144,208
Idaho	43,577	Lincoln	109,225
Kootenai	188,775	Mineral	14,913
Latah	115,281	Powell, Silver Bow, and Deerlodge	2,813
Lewis and Nez Perce	290,283	Ravalli	14,703
Shoshone	26,999	Sanders	50,994
Total	925,162	Total	536,314
Total Northern Region			1,729,671

1/ Some counties have been combined to avoid disclosing operations of individual plants.

Method of making the 1950 lumber production survey

Lumber production data for 1950 were obtained through the joint efforts of the Bureau of the Census and the Forest Service. Production statistics for 74 mills were obtained from the Bureau of the Census. The Northern Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station of the Forest Service collected and tabulated data for 397 mills. One hundred mills were classified as idle and production for 367 nonresponding mills was derived by sampling 32 of them. The samples were drawn from each of four strata: 8 out of 97 mills cutting less than 50,000 board feet; 9 out of 171 mills cutting 50,000 to 500,000; 12 out of 92 mills cutting 500,000 to 5,000,000; and 3 out of 7 mills cutting 5,000,000 to 10,000,000. These sample mills were contacted and the appropriate average production was multiplied by the number of nonresponding mills that were not sampled to determine production for each group. The total production of these mills was then added to the production of the responding and sample mills.

Accuracy of the 1950 survey

Individual mill production reports were received from 471 mills for 1,592,609,000 feet, board measure, or 92 percent of the total production. The production of the 367 nonresponding mills, as calculated from the samples was 137,062,000 feet, board measure, or 8 percent of the total production. The sampling error for the nonresponding mills is ±40 percent and the sampling error of the total regional production is ±3.2 percent.